

Department of Parks and Recreation

Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve

Strategic Action Plan



August 2022

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Introduction

History:

The land comprising the Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve (HBNP) and Koko Head District Park was once part of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Estate. In 1928, the City and County of Honolulu (City) bought the leasehold from the Bishop Estate for \$1.00 with the provision that the area would be used for public recreation and provide public access to HBNP. The City's jurisdiction ends at the high water mark on the beach. It does not include the Bay itself. From the high water mark on the beach to the open ocean, HBNP falls under the jurisdiction of the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR).

In 1967, Hanauma Bay was designated the State of Hawai'i's first Marine Life Conservation District (MLCD). The Hanauma Bay MLCD is one of Hawai'i's twelve U.S. Clean Water Act Class AA marine embayments, and is adjacent to the Hawai'ian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary. It provides a critical marine habitat for Hawai'ian monk seals and green sea turtles protected under the Endangered Species Act, as well as over 450 species of fish and other marine organisms, including twenty five (25) coral species, five (5) of which are endemic to Hawai'i.

The Hanauma Bay MLCD is an iconic symbol of Hawai'i around the world. It is the most popular aquatic tourist attraction in Hawai'i after Waikīkī, hosting approximately one million visitors per year before the COVID-19 pandemic. Managed by the City's DPR, the HBNP provides access control to the MLCD, visitor infrastructure support, and educational outreach about the cultural, geological, and marine resources of both the HBNP and the MLCD.

In 2019, the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Honolulu Emergency Services Department (HESD), began working collaboratively to develop a Strategic Action Plan, along with a Steering Committee comprised of community members appointed by Mayor Kirk Caldwell. After the 2020 elections, Mayor Rick Blangiardi continued the effort with many of the same members and included some new members. The Department of Enterprise Services and the Department of Budget and Fiscal Services were added to the Committee since they have responsibilities that impact HBNP. See Appendix 1 for a list of 2019 and 2021 Committee members. The 2021 effort focused on five specific topics to identify areas of consensus and next steps:

- Education
- Financial stability and Concession
- Conservation and scientific research and monitoring
- Infrastructure and asset management
- Fiscal accountability and accounting.

The following vision and mission statements were established by the committee.

Vision Statement

Hanauma Bay is a fiscally responsible nature preserve which supports a thriving ecosystem and living laboratory, while providing a quality experience for everyone.

Mission Statement

To provide an exceptional first-hand, interactive marine life conservation experience that perpetuates the protection of Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve's historical, cultural, and natural resources for this and future generations.

Conservation and scientific research and monitoring

Conservation Efforts:

The DPR will continue to work with other government agencies, nonprofits, conservation groups, and the like, to continue to promote and expand conservation efforts at HBNP. The DPR understands that conservation at HBNP is a team effort and is committed to nurturing the existing relationship with DLNR and community groups, such as the Friends of Hanuama Bay. A good partnership between DPR and DLNR will ensure a holistic approach to conservation at HBNP.

Considerations:

- a. Transparency – Keeping the community at large updated on what conservations are being done at HBNP.
- b. Collaboration – Facilitating discussions with HBNP partners [scientists, volunteer groups, DAR, University of Hawai'i – School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology (UH-SOEST, DOE, etc.)] to determine what conservation efforts are done at HBNP.

Scientific Research and Monitoring

The DPR supports and encourages scientific research and monitoring of HBNP. The information from scientific research and monitoring will assist DPR in managing the preserve and detect and/or predict changes that will require management intervention.

Research should also include the cultural significance of the area. There are Hawai'ian legends about HBNP and this should be shared with all visitors to the area, from keiki to kupuna.

To assist the department in evaluating scientific research, DPR will be establishing a Science Advisory Group. This group will assist the department in evaluating requests to do scientific research and to determine how to disseminate any research data that is obtained at HBNP. Members of the group will include the following: members of local community groups, such as the Friends of Hanauma Bay; DAR; science community; and someone versed in Hawai'ian culture.

Education Program

The goal of the education program at HBNP is to educate visitors about the unique and fragile resources at the preserve and promote respectful, sustainable, and safe activities at HBNP. The education program provides visitors an understanding of the significant natural resource of HBNP and the environmental issues, like coral reef preservation and the impacts human activity has on the marine ecosystems.

Future Education Program

The DPR worked collaboratively with the Department of Land and Natural Resources – Division of Aquatic Resources (DAR), Friends of Hanauma Bay, the current vendor of the Education Program, volunteers, and City staff to get a high-level vision for the future of the Education Program. The program will include educating visitors on safety, historical, cultural, and marine and terrestrial natural resources. To guide the discussion, the group answered a questionnaire, which can be found in Appendix 2. This is the first time that the education program contract will be going out to bid.

The future education program will have the following elements:

- **Collaboration**– Identifying partners who have a vested interest in HBNP and collaboratively working with them to develop and annually review the education program. This would include scientists, community (Friends of Hanauma Bay, etc), cultural practitioners, and government (DAR, University of Hawai'i, City and County of Honolulu agencies, Hawai'i Tourism Authority), and other appropriate partners.
- **Curriculum** – Include information on historical, cultural, and marine and terrestrial natural resources which will provide visitors an understanding of the history of HBNP, cultural aspect of the place, importance of respecting the 'āina, and 'Āina-based education.
- **Volunteers** – Develop and maintain a training program for volunteers since they are an integral component of any educational program and add invaluable staffing capacity.
- **Stewardship** - Foster stewardship through outreach.
- **Outreach**. Cultivate new ways to outreach, which will support the vision and missions statements of HBNP.
- **Safety and informational** – Enhance information provided to the public via media and signages by making them multi-lingual and increasing the number around HBNP. Include Ocean Safety in refreshing the media message and signages.
- **Visitor Center** – Create innovative ways to educate the public and improve the exhibits at the visitor center.
- **Technology** - Utilize technology to expand outreach and educate visitors.

Infrastructure and Asset Management

The HBNP is maintained by staff. To get an idea of what is currently done, see Appendix 3. From the working group, the DPR identified improvements and maintenance that are of importance to the community and staff.

Future construction and improvements

The future work done at HBNP should have low environmental impact, such as sustainable clean & renewable energy sources.

Improvements noted in the 2014 Master Plan:

- Visitor waiting area shade.
- Maintenance storage shed. Currently the maintenance supplies are stored in custodial rooms.
- Employee/volunteer parking at the unimproved area.
- Gift shop expansion.
- DPR to take over the Hawai'ian Telcom / Verizon building. This building could be a storage room for maintenance.
- Create a pedestrian walkway separate from the tram access road. For pedestrian safety, a separate walkway is needed.

Other suggested improvements:

- Secondary road in & out of the bay.
- Emergency access road to beach level. Currently, all traffic is stopped when EMS arrives and departs.
- Connect the gift shop drainage to the main drainage.
- Storm water prevention.
- Erosion / sediment control.
 - Build detention basin on the witched brew side. May need to build 2 basins.
 - Build a rock wall along the edge of the hill on the witches brew side of the bay to divert rain water into the basin.
- Renewable energy:
 - Build structure with solar panels with battery storage.
 - Incorporate vehicle electric charging stations to encourage use electric vehicles.
 - Implement bike lanes.
 - Electric tram.
- Parking system for the commercial lot.

Maintenance Plan

The goal for the maintenance plan of HBNP is to develop a plan that will aid the staff to strategize and budget for the maintenance at HBNP. The goal is to do the following: establish preventative maintenance plans for equipment; develop master agreements (MAs) to aid in the maintenance of HBNP, such as a MA for sewer repair; anticipate the useful life of the facility and equipment; and plan on when the facility and equipment need to be serviced and/or replaced.

Conclusion

There are many options for future construction and/or improvements that are being considered that will enhance the visitor experience at HBNP. The DPR will need to prioritize the construction and/or improvements to guide future discussions. Moving forward, the DPR will consider the effects of global warming and plan on making HBNP sustainable and resilient, utilizing renewable energy, and having a low impact to the environment.

The maintenance plan of HBNP shall include a preventative maintenance schedule for both the facility and equipment. The DPR will need to work with BFS to develop MAs and other similar contracts to aid in maintaining the facility in a timely fashion.

Above all, continue reaching out to the community for their feedback and provide regular communication with the public on “what is happening” at HBNP.

Public Safety and Drowning

At HBNP, there is a concern regarding the safety of visitors. The goal is to come up with a road map to increase public education about ocean safety and best practices.

As of the date of this report, there is not enough information regarding why there are so many visitors who drown at HBNP. Fact gathering and sharing of information between interested parties would aid in identifying best practices to improve ocean safety. Examples of interested parties would be Division of Aquatic Resources, the Drowning and Aquatic Injury Prevention Advisory Committee, Scientists who do research at the bay, to name a few. See Appendix 4 for the power point presentation shared by Tammie Smith.

To address public safety, the DPR will do the following:

- Signage – Evaluate the content and location of current and future signs at HBNP.
- Video – Enhance the existing video so visitors understand the dangers of HBNP.
- Education – Develop a program to inform visitors about best practices and precautions regarding scuba diving and snorkeling.

Financial Stability and Concession

The HBNP is a self-sufficient entity under the management of the DPR. In order to be self-sufficient, the DPR has an entry fee for non-residents, parking fee, and concession agreements. To begin the discussion, committee members were sent a questionnaire. See Appendix 5 for the questionnaire.

With the COVID pandemic and the need to manage visitorship in 2021, DPR took this time to determine a good balance between preserving the water quality and marine resources through managed access and limiting the number of persons entering the Bay, and making HBNP self-sufficient. Prior to COVID-19 these funding sources were sustainable. The COVID-19 pandemic showed how the shutdown and lack of visitors essentially shut down operations. The key moving forward is to determine what is the maximum number of visitors annually should be allowed to visit the Nature Preserve and whether that number can financially sustain all services there.

In 2021, the admission fee was raised to \$25/non-resident and in 2020, the parking fee was raised to \$3/non-resident and commercial vehicles were charged \$10 for 1-7 passengers, \$20 for 8 – 25 passengers, and \$40 for over 26 passengers. With the increase in admission fees for nonresidents and parking fees for commercial vehicles, DPR will be able to maintain HBNP with fewer visitors.

The balance between minimizing the number of visitors (both local residents and non-residents) and making HBNP self-sufficient, is very delicate and DPR is considering other options regarding concessions at HBNP. Currently, DPR is looking at limiting the number of visitors to 1500 visitors, the minimum necessary for viable concessions. The DPR will be working with the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) to develop new alternatives/options for concessions at HBNP. Several considerations are bundling entry fees with packages such as lunch and gear rental; evening activities located at the summit.

Other options that will be considered are grants and public private partnerships. The DPR will continue to look for grant opportunities due to HBNP's status as a Marine Life Conservation District and a Nature Preserve. For public private partnerships, the DPR is always open to hearing how the community is interested in partnering to continue to maintain and improve HBNP.

Financial Accountability and Accounting

The HBNP is a self-sufficient entity under the management of the DPR.

Section 6-51.2, Revised Ordinances of Honolulu, stipulates that fund monies are to be expended in support of the needs of the Preserve in the following order of priority:

1. For the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the Preserve;
2. For Education and orientation programs for visitors to the Preserve; and
3. A carrying capacity study and other studies relating to the environment condition of the Preserve.

An audit was conducted and has not been finalized as of the date of this strategic action plan. The DPR is prepared to adhere to the recommendations that are a result of the audit.

Currently, revenues realized at HBNP are used for the expenses incurred at HBNP, which include salaries, maintenance, capital improvement projects, just as an example.

Appendixes

Appendix 1

Committee Members

Members of the 2019 and 2021 Committees:

2019 Committee	2021 Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa Bishop –Friends of Hanauma Bay Robin Bond – Previous employee and author of the 1990 management plan for HBNP Elizabeth (Liz) Kumabe Maynard –University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program Jeffrey Kuwabara – University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Marine Option Program Coordinator Pam Martin – Board of Parks and Recreation Brian Nielson –State Division of Land and Natural Resources Kaipo Perez – Previous employee, Marine biologist Tammie Smith – State Department of Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steering Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa Bishop –Friends of Hanauma Bay Robin Bond – Previous employee and author of the 1990 management plan for HBNP Jeffrey Kuwabara – University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Marine Option Program Coordinator Pam Martin – Board of Parks and Recreation Brian Nielson –State Division of Land and Natural Resources Darren Okimoto – University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program Kaipo Perez – Previous employee, Marine biologist Tammie Smith – State Department of Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michele Nekota, DPR Tara Hirohata, DPR Louis Chung, DPR Joann Beall, DPR Jim Howe, Ocean Safety Charlie Oliveri, Ocean Safety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Team <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Laura H. Thielen, DPR Tara Hirohata, DPR Joann Beall, DPR Charlie Oliveri, Ocean Safety Jerry Pupillo, DES Tracy Kubota, DES Wendale Imamura, BFS Kelsi Imamura, BFS Kelly Wu, BFS Anthony Perreira, BFS Scott Kajioka, BFS

Note:

DPR – Department of Parks and Recreation

DES – Department of Enterprise Services

BFS – Budget and Fiscal Services

Appendix 2

Education Program

Questionnaire to Committee members regarding the Education Program

1. For the current Education Program, what has worked?
2. How can the current Education Program be improved?
3. What would be the minimal components of a Marine Education Program?
4. Should the Education Program include:
 - a. Historical
 - b. Cultural
 - c. Marine and terrestrial natural resources
5. What improvements should be done to the visitor center? What specifically should be removed and/or added?
6. What are other options to educate the public? Technology?
7. What types of community outreach should occur?
8. How should volunteers be utilized?
9. Additional high level questions that you feel should be addressed in the Education Program: _____

Current Education Program

The current program includes:

- An orientation video that shares the geological and cultural history of HBNP
- Information on the environment, reef etiquette, and ocean safety
- Managed by the University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program (Hawai'i Sea Grant)
- Provides a platform for marine biologists to share their studies amongst themselves and others locally and nationally
- Encourages nature preservation/environment and stewardship of HBNP. For example, the "E Mālama Hanauma Program" was created to provide opportunities for local schools to conduct service-learning activities at HBNP
- Training program for those who are interested in volunteering at HBNP
- Night time lectures which include lecturers who are ocean professional
- Continue to promote wise-use and understanding of marine and coastal resources through integrated research, extension, and education activities
- Developed Hawai'i Department of Education standards-based curriculum for visiting public schools on topics ranging from marine biology to geology to conservation to history to Hawai'ian culture.
- Conducts microplastic beach clean ups to teach students about marine debris while caring for the beach.

Appendix 3

Infrastructure and Asset Management

Overview of the maintenance at Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve

Currently, the staff at Hanauma Bay Nature Preserve (HBNP) has the responsibility to maintain the grass areas, buildings (i.e. gift shop, education center, comfort stations), and common areas (i.e. walkways, parking lot). Listed below are some of the daily, weekly, and monthly maintenance tasks that are done:

- Deep cleaning & disinfecting of comfort stations. This include the high touch points.
- Hourly spot checks and restocking of comfort stations
- Cleaning and scrubbing down shower pads
- Regularly maintain trash cans, which includes replacing the liners.
- Sweep/blow areas of leaves, sand, debris
- Safety check of facility
- Sweep/mop/disinfect theater, alcove, Administrative Office
- Mowing grass on beach level and upper level
- Weedwhacking
- Cleaning sewage wells
- Trimming of hedges, bushes
- Pressure washing comfort stations
- Cleaning out sand from drains

At HBNP, Building Maintenance Repairer (BMR) does minor repairs to include plumbing repairs (toilets, sinks, faucets, showers, irrigation), carpentry work, replacing light bulbs, etc.

In addition to the staff at HBNP maintaining the facility, there are other City agencies that assists with the upkeep of HBNP. The other agencies and how they assist HBNP is listed below, just to name a few:

Department	Assistance
DPR – Maintenance Support Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Beach cleaning weekly○ Plumbing repairs (toilets, sinks, showers, irrigation)○ Masonry repairs (flagstone, faux rock, rock wall, sign installation, other cement repairs)○ Carpentry repairs (doors, locks)○ Welding repairs (cattle gate)○ Emergency repairs
DPR – Division of Urban Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Trimming of all trees○ Responds to emergency with fallen trees/cracked branches
Department of Facility Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ All electrical repairs (light bulb replacement, security lights, indoor lighting, parking light lighting, electrical issues with sewage pumps)
Department of Enterprise Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Oversees all concession contacts (Food, Gift Shop, Snorkel Rental, ATM)
Department of Budget and Fiscal Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Assist with all procurement and service contracts

Presently, there is sufficient staffing due to the reduced hours. The current hours are 5 days a week, 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. The staff does include 2 park rangers, who reinforce the park rules to visitors of HBNP.

The modified hours of operation have also improved when work orders can be done at HBNP. Previously, HBNP was only closed 1 day a week, which was when the major repairs and maintenance could be done. Now it is closed 2 times a week, so this allows contractors to come in more often.

Appendix 4

Public Safety



A cartoon illustration of a diver in a blue tank and orange life preserver, floating in a blue underwater environment. The diver is wearing a white mask and has a friendly expression.

Goal:

The goal is to have the committee come up with possible solutions and increase public educating.

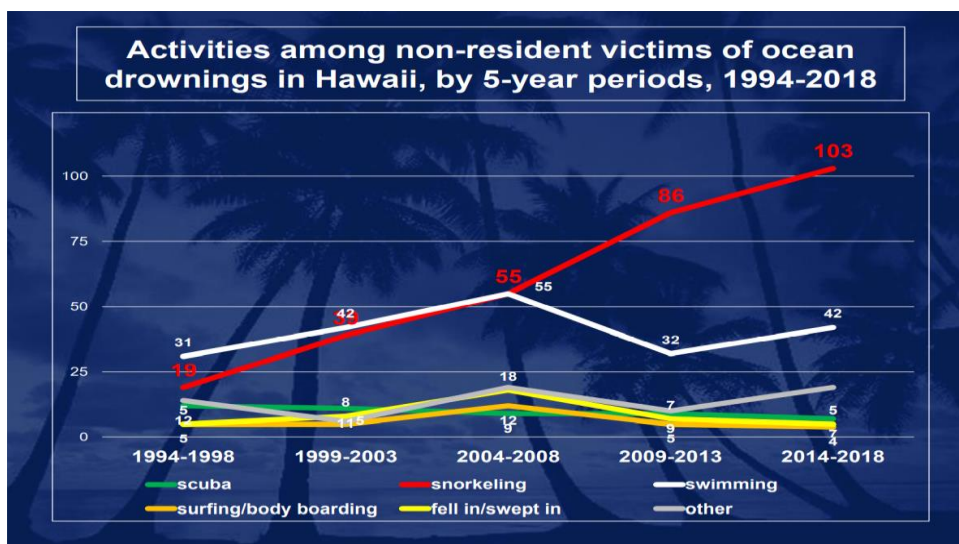
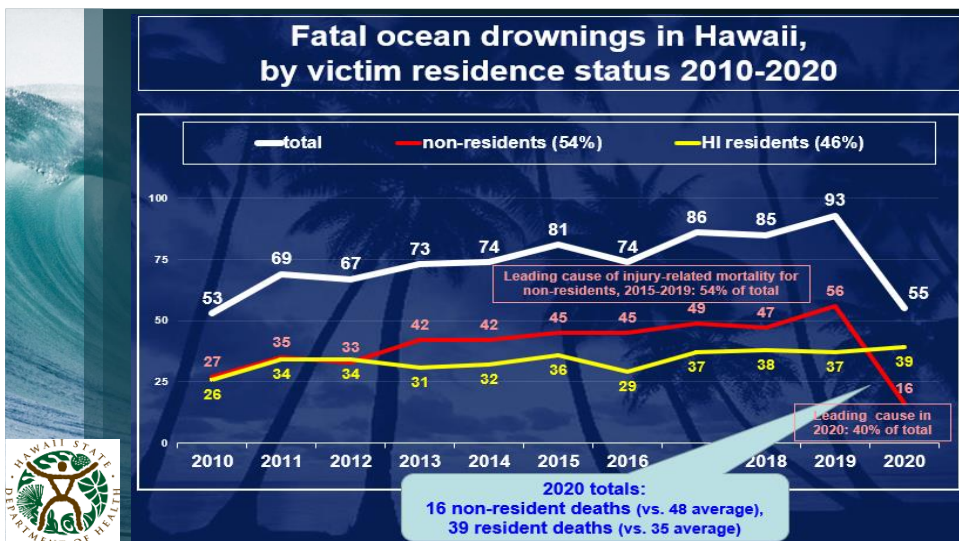
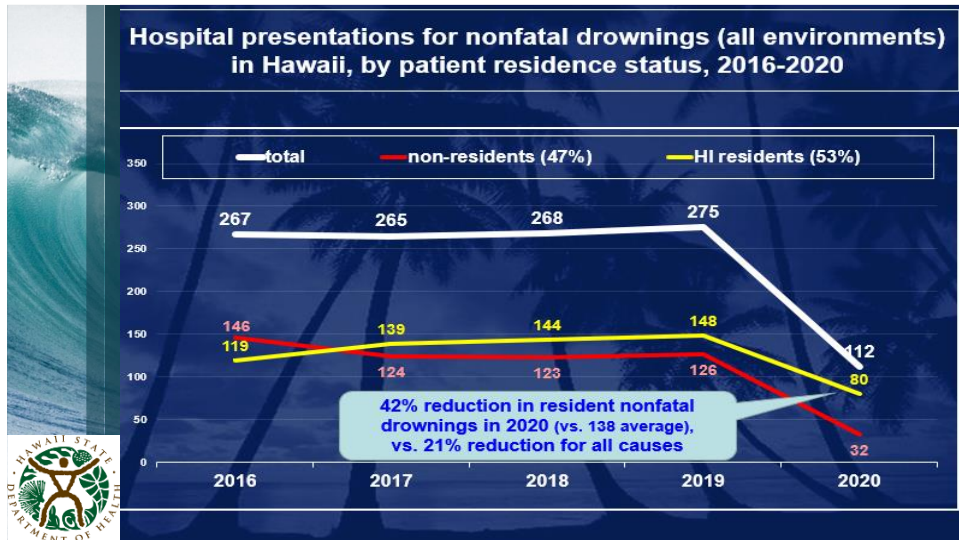
The logo of the Hawaii State Department of Health, featuring a green circular emblem with a stylized figure and the text 'HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'.

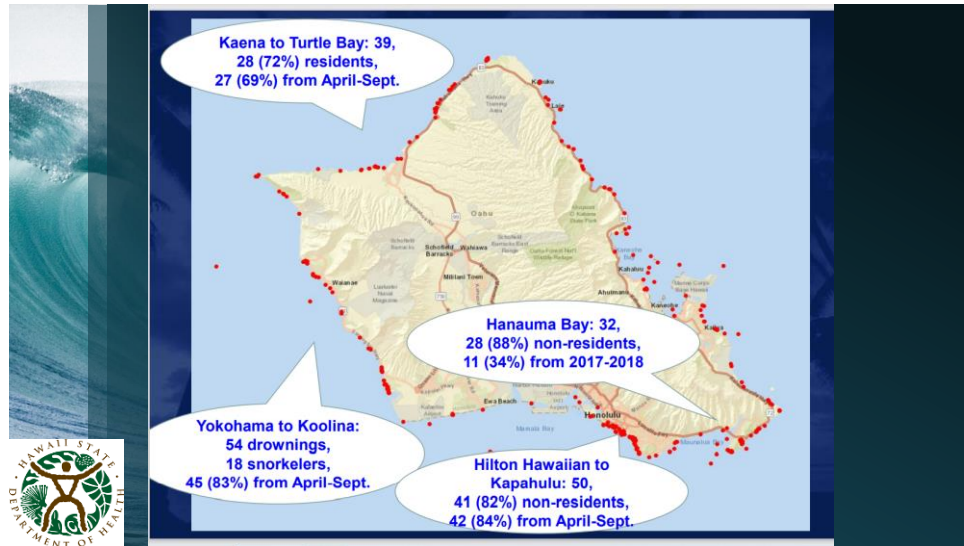
This slide has a dark blue background with a white border on the left side. The title 'Overview of Public Safety/Drowning' is at the top. Below it, a list of two bullet points is enclosed in a white box. The first bullet point is 'Brainstorming and next steps planning' and the second is 'Bringing collaborative partners to the table'. A small number '1' is visible in the bottom right corner.

Overview of Public Safety/Drowning

- Brainstorming and next steps planning
- Bringing collaborative partners to the table

1





Other resources

Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch

Dr. Daniel Galanis, Epidemiologist
Daniel.Galanis@doh.hawaii.gov



Dr. Alvin Bronstein, EMSIPSB Branch Chief
Alvin.Bronstein@doh.hawaii.gov



Appendix 5

Financial Stability and Concession

Questionnaire to Committee members regarding Financial Stability and Concessions

In order to develop a concession agreement, the Department of Enterprise Services (DES) asked the group to answer a few questions so DES can develop a concession agreement with the committee's input. Below were the questions posed to the Steering Committee.

- How to fund the goals of the HBNP action plan?
- What are the sources of funding for HBNP?
- How sustainable are those funding sources?
- What funding initiatives would group support?
- What funding initiatives would group oppose?
- What funding initiatives would group suggest?
- What is the daily capacity target moving forward?
- Financial targets knowing that reduction in people coming in will impact concession performance volumes?
- While people will pay more to get in they will not necessarily pay for large "in-park" vendor price increases. Thoughts to improve or mitigate this?

At the June meeting, DES educated the group with what they take into consideration when developing a concession agreement.